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(*b*) At first I died and when I rose up again I felt the wind of the spirits. My dying was my initiation. This *ukutwasa* was like that of the moon when it is new. I began to speak and speak and I danced with the python skin on my head. Then the people tested me whether I had bad or good spirits and after that I began to divine. The spirit of my grandfather, he has told me about this work. I am talking with his spirit when the horn is going round.

The fact of my being in Mcakhatha during the illness and death of Bambo Manga, and witnessing all the attendant ritual, gave me many opportunities of discussing the role of diviners in the ancestor cult, as well as of observing two of them at work. No such opportunity presented itself in the northern kingdom, but the role of the diviner was very fully discussed with leading Ngoni in Ekwendeni, Ezondweni and Hoho, and the account given by Cibambo at the beginning of this chapter was partly the result of these talks.

I have made several references to the graded hierarchy among the diviners, though I have not made any connexion between those diviners who either prophesied or made a diagnosis and those others, whether they were called *izanusi* or *izing'anga*, who made a diagnosis and also gave treatment through medicines. I have limited the analysis here to the diviners who operated through their own ancestral spirits and who, by virtue of this contact of theirs, claimed to be able to interpret the will of the ancestral spirits of the Ngoni clans. It was a notable fact that very few of the famous diviners, and none of the less well-known, were of Swazi clans, though the one true prophet in the story of the slaughter at Mabiri was of a Swazi clan. Two great *izinduna* and *alumuzana*, who were also dreamers and prophets, Gwaza Jere in the north and Golozela Nzunga in the central kingdom, were of Swazi clans. So also was the famous woman diviner NaNdumbu. It appeared that the capacity to become a diviner and the successful practice of the art was very unusual among the leading Ngoni. They depended therefore on men of lesser trans-Zambesi and cis-Zambesi clans to perform these duties for them. The attitude shown by leading Ngoni towards the diviners, already referred to, may have been partly a rationalization of their dependence on this kind of skill as well as on force of arms. It may also have been due to the necessity, admitted somewhat reluctantly, of using men of lower social status, that is of cis-Zambesi clans, for such vital services to the nation and to their own families. The Ngoni had a strong pragmatic streak which led them to suspect knowledge and skill which could not be reduced to concrete terms, and hence they were always ready to accuse the less well accredited diviners of lying and deceit.

In spite of Ngoni doubts and suspicions about the class of diviners as a whole, within their kingdoms these persons were recognized as specialists for certain reasons. They had all been through the experience described as *ukutwasa*. It began with physical symptoms, such as fainting,

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lack of appetite, forgetfulness, sweating. These manifestations could take place in childhood, around puberty, or when the man was fully grown, though the most usual age was in the late teens. The symptoms culminated in sharp pains and a prolonged collapse, and after that a deep sleep. It was then that the dreams came giving the man the assurance that he was henceforth a medium, and that through the spirit of his grandfather, or whoever was now appearing to him, he could communicate with the spirit world. At this time also he was told in dreams where to find medicines and what to do with them. A constant feature in the initiation of well known and accredited diviners was that they knew the name and identity of the spirit with whom they were in contact, and it appeared to be always someone related to them and most often their father's father.

As they returned to normality from an experience which was frightening in its intensity, it dawned on them that they now had to practise as a diviner, to make use of the powers which had come to them. There was evidence that they accepted this role with reluctance. Their relatives, when they saw them going through the earlier stages, were aware that there was an inevitable sequel, that of practising as a diviner, and they too shared the reluctance of the man himself. Sometimes a diviner began to practise by associating as a junior partner with a successful practitioner; sometimes he began hesitantly by himself. The criterion of the validity of their calling was their success. No one seemed to know what became of diviners who were unsuccessful and never became accredited. They apparently disappeared from the field because no one employed them.

The diviners whom I met and talked with, as well as those few whom I saw practising their calling, were considered by the Ngoni to possess a distinctive temperament. It was evident that they wished to live somewhat apart, and that they were withdrawn in a social as well as in a spatial sense. They married, but usually only one wife, and had children, but played little part in extended family or village affairs. Their huts were always on the outskirts of villages and were neither large and prosperous nor very poor looking. They had a reputation for being unpunctual and forgetful, but they were far from being unobservant. Part of their skill lay in watching people and learning about their concerns from observation and storing events in a good memory. Though they could work themselves up into emotionally excited states during a consultation, at other times they gave the impression of being controlled, rather quiet, detached, and uninfluenced by the currents of talk and opinion around them.

The rewards for their services were in kind as a rule, and could be articles of household equipment, food, cloth, and sometimes European clothes or goods from the stores, such as lanterns, soap, matches and cigarettes. There appeared to be no bargaining over payment. The